United Nations A/56/94

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 June 2001
English
Original: Arabic

Fifty-sixth session
Agenda item 37, 40, and 130 of the preliminary list*

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Culture of peace

Elimination of racism and racial discrimination

Letter dated 14 June 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to convey to you hereunder a response to the letter dated 18 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/56/79).

Whenever it reveals its true nature to the countries and peoples of the world and comes under international pressure to halt its aggression against the Arabs and the murder of their children, the destruction of their towns and the bulldozing of their homes, trees and crops, Israel, with the assistance of agencies it has established for this purpose, resorts to its old-new method of levelling accusations against the Arabs at random and especially of smearing them with anti-Semitism. Others, whose only offence is to deplore Israel's expansionist policies, its repressive practices and its infliction of all manner of collective punishment on the Palestinians in the occupied territories, are also not safe from charges of anti-Semitism. The most shameless feature of the letter of the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations is that it accuses the Arab leaders, the representatives of the Arab States at the United Nations, the Arab information media and Arab intellectuals and writers of racism and anti-Semitism. The charge has become one that is pre-packaged and ready for use by the Israelis to intimidate whoever dares to demand that they respect international law, international humanitarian law, international legality, the Charter of the United Nations and the International Bill of Human Rights.

This organized Israeli campaign against the Arabs in general and Syria in particular follows the historic and fruitful visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Syrian Arab Republic, which was described by the official spokesman for the

* A/56/50.

01-41319 (E) 190601 200601

Holy See as having been successful at all levels and in all its objectives. It also follows the visit of His Holiness to the liberated city of Qunaytirah (Kuneitra), which allowed the peoples of the world another opportunity to note the scale of the savagery of the Israeli occupation and the fact that it does not hesitate to destroy entire cities in order to gratify its impulses.

The visit in question also demonstrated to the entire world that the Syrian Arab Republic serves as an example others might emulate of the mutual tolerance and coexistence of the revealed religions. The charge of anti-Semitism that is made against the Arabs from time to time is no more than ignorance of the fact that the Arabs are Semites by origin, and this requires that Israel should desist from making a false accusation that is refuted by history and contradicted by any sound logic.

The correctness of our assertion is confirmed by the false claims made by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the effect that Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic, used in his speech before His Holiness the Pope such expressions as "treacherous Jewish mentality" and that he "accused the Jewish people of killing the principles of the divine faiths" and "encouraged Christians and Muslims to make common cause against the Jews". For our part, we challenge the representative of Israel and his backers to prove these claims.

At a time when no one has the option of denying historical facts, the President's speech did not refer to the Jews by name because his goal was not agitation or incitement against the adherents of any of the revealed religions. The objective was, in essence, to evoke a humanitarian vision of the future by urging a halt to the bloody practices being inflicted by the Israeli occupation authorities on a daily basis on the defenceless Palestinian people, because resort to such practices is not the way to establish a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

It must be obvious to all that Syria, as represented by its President, its Government and its people, respects the Jewish religion. It categorically refuses to fall into the trap of confusing Judaism, as a revealed monotheistic religion that it respects and believes in, with Zionism, as a political and ideological movement that has been used to occupy the territory of others by force and uproot its original inhabitants and transform them into refugees and to establish settlements in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the resolutions that represent international legality and the fourth Geneva Convention.

Furthermore, it is obvious that in his letter the representative of Israel also overlooks the many racist attitudes and policies that have been reflected in statements against the Arabs by Israeli officials in recent months. We will content ourselves with citing some of these statements, attitudes and practices against the Arabs because to mention all of them would require many volumes. One of the ministers of the Israeli Government, Rehavam Zeevi, has demanded that Palestinians living in Israel who have Israeli nationality should place yellow signs, cards or markings on their clothing so that they can be distinguished from Israelis. This is what the Nazis did in Germany. The same minister has said that the solution for Palestine is to expel the Palestinians from the country, and that in this manner they would be able to preserve the purity of the Jewish race. Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, the spiritual leader of the Shas party, which is now one of the parties in the Israeli coalition Government, described Arabs a few months ago as "monkeys". He subsequently said that the Arabs are snakes and that God, after creating the Arabs, had regretted doing so because they are snakes. Three weeks ago he said that they

must annihilate the Arabs, and he urged the Israeli Government to smite the Arabs with all types of missiles so that not one of them remains. No Israeli official has condemned or deplored these racist statements, and indeed the Israeli Government has met the demands of Ovadiah Yosef, has attacked the Palestinians with missiles and has used all kinds of weapons against them, including depleted-uranium munitions and F-16 aircraft. In 1982 the leader of the present Israeli Government committed the most rapid massacre in human history when he killed more than 2,000 Palestinians and Lebanese in the Sabra and Shatilla camps in less than two hours. An Israeli soldier said to Israel Army Radio recently, referring to the Palestinian martyrs, "I fight them — and I kill them — as if I was dancing rock 'n' roll". A delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross has stated that the construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories is a war crime and a violation of the fourth Geneva Convention. In advice to his soldiers, the Prime Minister of Israel said to them: "We don't want you to think but to act!" Intimate relations between Israel and the former racist Governments of South Africa were maintained until these regimes were overthrown and South Africa was freed of apartheid. The world is now seeing and hearing how the children, women and elders of Palestine are killed without mercy. The names of children such as Muhammad al-Durrah, who was killed in his father's arms, and Iman Hajju, a four-month-old infant killed while sleeping in her cot, remain in the memory of the international community.

In his letter, the representative of Israel is not ashamed to refer to the Charter of the United Nations or to the preamble of the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, both of which Israel has been violating without inhibition and without respite since it was first established. Wars do indeed begin in the minds of men, but they do not remain merely inchoate in the minds of Israeli leaders. They rather give them practical effect as in their wars against the Arabs and their illegal occupation of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian territories. In connection with the item "Culture of peace" under which the representative of Israel requests the circulation of his letter, it appears that he did not give himself the trouble of reading the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/243 of 13 September 1999. Otherwise he would have known that paragraph 15 [i.e. 16] (c) [of the Programme of Action] mentions "the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war", that article 3 (n) [of the Declaration stresses "the right of all peoples, including those living under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation, to self-determination"] and that paragraph 10 (j) [of the Programme of Action calls for action to] "remove obstacles to the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular of peoples living under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation". The truth is that Israel pursues a culture of war instead of a culture of peace.

The United Nations, which was established after the Second World War for the purpose of safeguarding security and peace in the world and was entrusted with the task of ensuring an end to occupation, must halt Israel's practices and its killing of Arabs, continued occupation of their territories and violation of their legitimate rights, because such actions debase the Organization and the purposes and principles enshrined in its Charter. The Organization, and especially the Security Council, must also proceed forthwith to implement its resolutions relating to the crisis in the Middle East, and in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and

338 (1973). It must resolve the issue of the 1948 Palestine refugees within the framework of international legality and must do so without delay and in a resolute manner. Instead of levelling false accusations against the Arabs and their leaders, Israel must relinquish its racism and its inhuman practices and must adhere to the peace process and its terms of reference, specifically withdrawal from Syrian territory and from the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, to the line of 4 June 1967 and the completion of its withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese territories. Israel and its leaders must understand that the causes of all that is happening in the occupied Arab territories are Israel's maintenance of its occupation of the Arab territories, its denial of Arab rights and its use of a logic of force and arrogance instead of the force of logic and truth.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 37, 40 and 130 of the preliminary list.

(*Signed*) Fayssal **Mekdad**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.